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Scenic Railway Officials Proceed With Plans for Summer Operation

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HEBER CITY — Wasatch Mountain Scenic Railway officials have acquired a new engine to be used in the "Heber Creeper" scenic run from Heber City to a point near Bridal Veil Falls in Provo Canyon.

This is the second engine the group has on hand for the operation, which will hopefully begin sometime in July.

The WMSR is waiting word from the Utah State Road Commission on whether the right-of-way can be acquired by the Utah Parks and Recreation Division from the state highway department.

Rail Route

Route of the railroad would be around the north and west sides of Deer Creek Reservoir. A Utah State Senate resolution does not require the road commission to sell the land, but states that it is

the will of the legislature that the highway commission transfer title to the railroad bed and tracks to the Utah Parks and Recreation Division.

State Sen. Robert F. Clyde, R-Heber City, introduced the senate resolution expressing the will of the legislature that title to the Heber Creeper tracks be transferred from the highway department to the Parks and Recreation Division.

WMSR officials are now engaged in an effort to raise \$80,000 to support the project.

Others Profitable

Similar scenic railway operations in Colorado and other states have been profitable, reports Harold Tippetts, Utah Parks director. Leon Ritchey, a member of the railway's board of the directors, said that money is being raised by selling stock in the operation.

The highway department has given the group one year to prove feasibility of the operation.

The railroad group hopes that by that time a master plan for Provo Canyon will have been worked out, which will include highway, railroad and other development programs so that all projects can be coordinated for the best long-range benefit for all concerned.

A Problem

One problem already encountered is that if the railroad is left in the canyon, it will intersect with the proposed road plans. An underpass or similar bypass will cost several thousand dollars extra. The upper portion of the highway through Provo Canyon has not yet been designed and public hearings will be held on this

project, highway officials have said.

Lowe Ashton, WMSR chairman from Heber City, has said, "This area is unique in beauty, readily reached from several communities and should be preserved, and a scenic railway is one way both goals can be accomplished."

"The idea has been approved in principle by the legislature and it has the support of many groups concerned about the ecological values of the canyon. It is now up to us to make it work, and that is what we aim to do."